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THE BENEFITS OF WAR.

BY REAR-ADMIRAL S. B. LUCE, UNITED STATES NAVY.

WAR is one of the great agencies by which human progress is effected.

Scourge though it be, and much as its practice is to be deplored, we must still recognize war as the operation of the economic laws of nature for the government of the human family. It stimulates national growth, solves otherwise insoluble problems of domestic and political economy, and purges a nation of its humors. According to an ancient proverb, *Purgamenta hujus mundi sunt tria, pestis, bellum, et frateria.*

War is the malady of nations ; the disease is terrible while it lasts, but purifying in its results. It tries a nation and chastens it, as sickness or adversity tries and chastens the individual. There is a wisdom that comes only of suffering, whether to the family or to the aggregation of families—the nation. Man is perfected through suffering.

What is true of the average individual is true of the mass of individuals—the people.

Some of the richest contributions to literature, art, and science have been the offsprings of indigence. Want brings out the natural gifts that affluence stifles. So, in the economy of nature, or the providence of God, war is sent, not necessarily for the punishment of national sins, nor yet for national aggrandizement ; but, rather, for the forming of national character, the shaping of a people's destiny, and the spreading of civilization.

It is only through long years of severe trials and tribulations that many men and women have been schooled to ultimate success. So nations, before achieving greatness, have had to struggle through periods of bitter strife before the various factions, with their conflicting interests, have been formed into one homogeneous mass.

As adversity and opposition toughen the mental and moral fibre and temper the spirit of man, so riches and easily-acquired success enervate the strongest character and unfit it for protracted effort. It is the same with nations. War arouses all the latent energies of a people, stimulates them to the highest exertion, and develops their mental and material resources.

History presents few finer pictures than that of the Roman Senate thanking Varro at the city gates because, after Cannæ, "he had not despaired of the republic." Steeled by incessant warfare to an inflexible resolution, not gold, but Rome's best blood, was named by those stern Senators, in that desperate hour, as the price of liberty.

But the "cankers of a calm world and long peace" atrophize the active forces, and luxury becomes more destructive than the sword.

Rome, once mistress of the world, the seat of arts, empire, and glory, fell by corruption to a state of sloth, ignorance, and poverty. From "virtuous industry," says the historian, "it passed to wealth; from wealth to luxury; from luxury to an impatience of discipline and corruption of morals; till, by a total degeneracy and loss of virtue, being grown ripe for destruction, it fell at last under the hand of the oppressor; and, with the loss of liberty, losing everything that was valuable, sank gradually again into its original barbarism." Such is the law of the rise and fall of nations.

But for war the civilization we now enjoy would have been impossible. The swath cut by the reaper's sickle through fields of ripened grain is not more marked than the way cut by the sword for the path of human progress. "Westward the star of empire took its way," for westward set the tide of conquest.

The imposing wave of barbaric triumph swept from Asia across the Ægean Sea, only to be turned back by united Greece armed in the sacred cause of liberty. The battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea were only so many stepping-stones towards an ascendancy of Hellenic civilization, the influence of which on human affairs can never die. Without war Greece would have lived on æstheticism and wasted its life in idle dreams.

The overthrow of the Persian Empire by the trained soldiers of Macedonia, it has been well observed, is the first great revolution in the affairs of mankind of which we have knowledge. The

fall of Carthage and the elevation of Rome from the same cause—disciplined troops—are the second. These were great strides in the course of human progress. Hannibal's long and devastating campaigns in Italy moulded through years of battle the martial Roman of a later day, as already noted, and prepared the City of the Seven Hills, as no discipline but war could have prepared her, to reign mistress of the world, and give laws and letters to nations then unborn. "No power," remarks a modern historian, "was ever based on foundations so sure and deep as those which Rome laid during three centuries of conquest."

Says a profound student of biblical literature: "The world, before it was ready to accept Hellenism and Christianity, had to be prepared and made smooth for centuries beforehand. A great humanizing force had to be created—a force powerful enough to beat down the obstacles which local patriotism offered to the idealistic propaganda of Greece and Judea. Rome fulfilled this extraordinary function. Rome, by prodigies of civic virtue, created the force of the world, and this force served to propagate the work of Greece and the work of Judea—that is to say, civilization." The Roman legions supplied the force.

The eagles of Cæsar spread through western Europe, and among the rude Britons, the seeds of civilization, and prepared the way for higher forms of political life. Later on, generations of fierce contention between the Dane and Saxon, Angle and Norman, on the soil of Britain, fused these various peoples into the English-speaking race of the present day. Thus by war were amalgamated three branches of the great Teutonic family with each other and with the original Briton. The Great Charter, wrung from King John by those iron barons, "sword in hand," as Sir William Blackstone tells us, united the Normans and the Saxons and forms the first chapter in the history of the English nation. The Great Charter and the Bill of Rights, and the principles of civil and religious liberty they embody, are the priceless heritage of every American. Their full enjoyment, it must be remembered, cost "rivers of English blood." Transplanted to the shores of America, those principles assumed, according to the law of evolution, still higher forms; but their possession had first to be won and then maintained by the sword.

From the "blue Cyclades" to the slopes of the Pacific, war has made possible the slow, but certain, development of the great

law of human progress, and of the principles of democracy. The operation of this law is not to be arrested on the hither shores of the Pacific ; nor is history to be turned back. The course of empire still holds its accustomed way. With the United States, as the dominant power of the western world, lies the obligation of contributing her share to the further extension of civilization, to the spreading of the gospel, and conveying to less favored nations the most enlightened views of civil government. Peaceful commerce is one of the forces by which this end may be attained ; and the Pacific and its further shores the field of its operations. This splendid work our people are now content to leave to England and those most effective missionaries, her military and mercantile marines. The time will come, however, when the nation, in its manhood, will "put away childish things," assume its own high responsibilities, and organize its forces for practical use.

We are far from maintaining that war is the only agency through which the present advanced state of civilization has been reached. Christianity has been, and must continue to be, an indispensable factor. But the sword has ever preceded the banner of the cross. Indeed, Christianity, as we shall see, has often had to work its own way through the instrumentality of the sword.

Commerce is another great factor. By it civilization is carried over wide seas to distant lands ; but commerce owes its extension and protection to the military arm of the people it represents.*

Wars have sometimes been precipitated in spite of all human efforts to prevent them. As in the presence of the convulsions of nature man feels his utter nothingness, so in the great political and religious movements which have marked certain epochs in history man has found himself impotent to either control or guide the march of events. It is then that he acknowledges that human affairs are directed by a power above and beyond this world, for the ultimate good of his race. Such was, preëminently, the case in this country in 1861. It was so in England in 1642. That revolution which "taught Englishmen what good government meant," and is part of the history of this country, was the natural

* It seems like uttering a platitude to quote De Tocqueville's remark that "reason and experience prove that no commercial prosperity can be durable if it cannot be united in case of need to naval force." ("Democracy in America.") His prophecy that "America will one day become the first maritime power of the globe—they are born to rule seas, as the Romans were to conquer the world," will doubtless be fulfilled in time.

fruit of the Reformation. It was the first collision between freedom of inquiry and absolute monarchy. In the impulse which was given to human thought, and in the abolition of absolute power in the spiritual order, the Reformation, we are told, accomplished far more than it had undertaken or even dreamed of. It failed to even comprehend the vast extent of its own work. It did not respect the rights of opinion. At the very moment of demanding those rights for itself, it was violating them towards others. Great as its work undoubtedly was, it could be completed only through the agency of the sword.

That protracted and bloody drama, the Thirty Years' War, which in the name of religion devastated and impoverished Germany, saved Protestantism from obliteration, insured religious toleration, and opened the way to the German intellectual life of a later time.

The net results of Napoleon's campaigns were to break up the system of petty states in Germany and Italy, "to reawaken the spirit of inquiry in the people, to sweep away the relics of an effete feudalism, and leave the ground clear for the growth of newer and better forms of political life."

Our own Civil War furnishes as notable an example as may be found in history of the operation of this law of strife by which human progress is effected. War was the only means of solving the great political problem of the abolition of slavery, and the phenomenal progress, not of the South alone, but of the whole country, during the past twenty-five years, bears abundant testimony to the quickening influences of that momentous struggle.

Heaven forbid that we should even seem to be an advocate of war. We are not an advocate of war, nor of pestilence, nor of famine. On the contrary, we join with the church in praying for deliverance from them. But this is not a question of what one could wish: it is a question of a great fundamental truth.

From constantly recurring phenomena of the same class covering periods marked by centuries, and the tendency of the same phenomena at the present time, we are enabled to arrive at certain laws. Thus from the frequency of wars both in ancient and in modern times, even up to the present writing, and from the marked influence those wars have had on national life and character, it is impossible to escape the conviction that they are the results of fixed laws, and not the products of human in-

stitutions established, and admitting of being abolished, by the commonwealth of nations.

Strife in one form or another in the organic world seems to be the law of existence. "Life," the scientist tells us, is but "the sum of all the forces that resist death." Suspend the struggle, well called the battle of life, for a brief space, and death claims the victory. The struggle begins at birth, and ends in one unvarying way at the grave.

In the battle of life there are two distinct lines of operation—that which has to do with physical and that which has to do with moral laws.

In this way it comes that a man finds himself at war first with himself, and then with his neighbor. The supreme law of self-preservation compels a man to obtain his daily bread. Acquisitiveness begets avarice. To save his darling treasure a man will defraud his brother; hence family feuds. From inherent weakness and clashing of opinion there are bitter contentions among churchmen; among congregations and their pastors; among Christian associations of various kinds. Strife is continual and everywhere in this wicked world. In the sublime vision of St. John the Divine, there was war in heaven when the archangel Michael and his legions of angels fought against the dragon, which is the evil one. It was the strife between the principle of good and the principle of evil; and where is that strife maintained but in the human heart? St. James asks of the turbulent Jews of Palestine: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" And St. Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, struck the same keynote of human passions: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

It would be difficult to find in sacred or profane literature a clearer expression than St. Paul's of this fundamental law of human nature. As long as that law remains unchanged, just so long may we look for an inward conflict going on in every human bosom, and the predominance in one individual or another of the principle of good or the principle of evil; and just so long may we look for covetousness and envy, and for dissensions among individuals, communities, and nations.

By the very law of our nature, it thus appears, the well-spring

of war is in the human heart. When the apostle of universal peace can change human nature itself, then may he hope to put an end to war. The utmost that we can now reasonably hope for is to lessen the frequency and the evils of war.

Sadly enough, religious wars are the most relentless ; and the darkest and bloodiest pages of history have been recorded in the name of him who taught and practised the divine law of love. And yet, was it not even he who said, "Think not that I am come to send peace, . . . but a sword ?"

It has been said that it was one of the greatest reproaches to human nature that wars are sometimes just; and the author of "*Gesta Christi*" complains that there is "one field where Christianity seems a failure." "War," he says, "still remains the most fearful curse upon mankind." On the same grounds we may regard disease as a reproach to human nature, and charge inadequacy to the Christian religion because we have such dreadful railroad accidents. Christianity, we apprehend, has to do with the regeneration of the human heart, and not with the laws of nature. "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." But "be not troubled," said the Holy one of Israel ; "for all these things must come to pass." We are told, it is true, that there is a time coming when war shall cease. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," declared our Divine Master. That is to say, when the human heart shall have become regenerate, the prophecy will be fulfilled that the sword, the emblem of war, shall be turned into the ploughshare, the emblem of peace, and spears into reaping-hooks. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Then that "old serpent which is the devil" shall be bound for a thousand years, and "deceive the nations no more till the thousand years be fulfilled." But Satan, still unbound, ceases not "from going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it," and "deceiving the nations."

Contrary doctrines, founded on denunciations indiscriminately heaped upon the practice of war by various writers at various times, have been frequently expressed in recent years. The late Dr. Francis Wayland, in his "*Elements of Moral Science*," laid down the broad principle that "all wars are contrary to the revealed will

of God.”* Starting with that assumption, it is argued that the law of human progress is leading man to a state of moral perfection on earth; and that, because of the wonderful advances in the arts and sciences which have characterized the age, we must be rapidly approaching that blissful state. Orators find this a popular theme; people like to hear it. But the connection—say, rather, the *disconnection*, or, truer still, the antagonism—between material prosperity and spiritual growth is not made clear.

Of the whole range of sciences, moral science, founded on Christian ethics, on which the attainment of the earthly Eden depends, has made no progress in eighteen hundred years. The principles governing the moral world were laid down by the great founder of our church in the beginning, and left nothing to be said, no improvement to be made. He distinctly stated, moreover, and all his teachings went to show, that his kingdom was not of this world.

Even the preparation for war has been denounced. “From a general comprehension of the war system,” said Charles Sumner,—and he has hosts of followers,—“we perceive the unchristian character of the preparations it encourages and requires.”† But, according to Moses and the prophets, God himself worked out, through the agency of war, the destiny of his own chosen people. And our Saviour, so far from condemning war, counselled a wise prudence in regard to all worldly affairs. “What king,” he asked, after his wonderful manner of conveying lessons of the most profound wisdom,—“What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”

It was by war and pestilence that the children of Israel were disciplined. “If ye rebel,” was the divine mandate, “ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

*It is only fair to state that during the Civil War Dr. Wayland became convinced of his mistake in this particular. But his work had long been used as a textbook in our schools, and the influence of his erroneous teaching on the subject referred to is still felt.

† Address before the American Peace Society, May 28, 1819, on “True Grandeur of Nations.”

Moses, the greatest military leader of ancient times, conducted his campaigns in accordance with the instructions received from God himself. For he had found grace in the sight of the Lord, who spake to him face to face, as a man speaketh to a friend. Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak, son of Abinoam, sang praises to the Lord for their victory over the Canaanites. "They fought from heaven" is their song; "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor," is the salutation of the angel to Gideon, as he was threshing wheat. Jephthah, receiving assurances of divine support, went out and defeated the sons of Ammon. Sacred history resounds with the clash of arms and the songs of triumph; and lurid beacon fires, streaming through the soft Syrian nights, frequently call God's people to war. The result of all these conflicts furnishes one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the human race. From the lowest and most abject state of Egyptian bondage, the children of Israel were trained by war to become a powerful race, to take their stand among the nations of the earth, and give to all succeeding ages, in an imperishable literature, the principles of the highest civilization.

The ancient and "immovable civilization" of China, on the other hand, shows the stagnation of a people unaccustomed to war with a superior race. China, to-day, presents a picture of what the modern world would have been without war.* The rights of man are there unknown.

War is certainly a great evil, and abhorrent to every right-minded person. So is small-pox. But it is not the greatest evil. Milton said, during the Commonwealth, that civil war was not as great an evil as a tyrannical government. "When the devil of tyranny," said he, "hath gone into the body politic, he departs not but with foaming and great convulsions: shall he, therefore, vex it forever, lest in going out he, for a moment, tear and rend it?"

The proper spirit in which to consider a great evil is to look it in the face, examine into its origin, and seek the causes which lead to its production. If these causes lie in the operation of

* The modern world. The civilization of China probably represents that of the Chaldeans, of about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, 588 B. C. The wars which China has engaged in with England and with France, while too restricted in their sphere of action to affect the mass of the Chinese people, have undoubtedly had a marked local influence.

the laws of nature, which cannot be influenced by human action, then we must endeavor to modify the effects and ameliorate, as far as lies in our power, the conditions to which they give rise. Man cannot control the meteorological laws which manifest themselves in cyclones; but he can build ships and houses strong enough to withstand their violence. Medical science cannot conquer death, but it has done much to alleviate suffering; and statistics show that the average duration of human life has been increased through increased knowledge of the laws of hygiene. Moral science cannot boast of a like achievement. It has been stated on good authority that; while the population has increased 30 per cent. from 1870 to 1880, the number of criminals in the United States has increased 82.33 per cent. Immorality and crime are on the increase. This fact, coupled with those of the centralization of wealth and the interminable conflict between capital and labor, makes a gloomy outlook for that brotherhood of man which is to form the basis of universal peace.

Questions in medical science are submitted to rigorous investigation according to scientific methods. Questions in moral science are too often treated from a sentimental standpoint, or quietly ignored. Even in this enlightened age we seek to eradicate the "great social evil" by shutting our eyes to it. There is a widespread disposition to treat war in the same way—by shutting the public eye to it. What progress had pathology made by that method?

It is the popular and very proper thing to say that the progressive spirit of the age is leaving the barbarism of war behind, and that as civilization advances it will learn less of war. Arbitration is now the sovereign panacea for that national ill. But, as a matter of fact, war has never been so carefully and so systematically studied as at the present time. The genius of invention has never been so prolific as now in devising and improving implements of war. That man is honored and enriched who contrives means of destroying the greatest number of human beings in the shortest space of time. As the conduct of war becomes more scientific, and the art becomes refined, and the implements more destructive, the recurrence of war is lessened, the duration shortened, and the loss of human life diminished. This is the direction the spirit of the age is taking—a direction in the interests of humanity.

These humane conditions, however, involve an advanced stage of preparation. As a science war should be sedulously cultivated by the few qualified to undertake it ; as an art it should be constantly practised by the entire body set apart for that purpose, and with the implements actually to be used in war. It is to this state of preparation that we owe the peace of Europe to-day. The mere presence of the American army on our southern frontier in 1866 was sufficient to cause the collapse of Louis Napoleon's scheme for a Mexican empire. By a perfect state of preparation a collision of arms was avoided and the shedding of blood spared. To be unprepared is wicked. It invites aggression and a useless effusion of blood. The question of an empire in Mexico supported by French bayonets was not one for arbitration. We simply would not have it.

There is a certain class of international questions for which arbitration is admirably suited ; there is another class for which it is not suited at all—for which it is totally inadmissible. It is the lamb that advocates arbitration, even though the life and honor of the fold be involved, while the wolf maintains a lofty indifference to all such methods of proceeding.

Venezuela has been for years past supplicating for arbitration on the question of boundary between her own territory and that claimed by England ; but it is only within the last few months that the latter power has, according to report, formally declined the good offices of the United States in that controversy.

Arbitration was inadmissible in 1860—61, when so sorely needed. War, which had been in the course of preparation for thirty years preceding its outbreak, was the only solution of the great problem. It had to be.

Arbitration fails miserably when most needed, and what wonder ? The high contracting parties and their umpires are all men of like passions, having no court of last resort but the battlefield.

Every Christian, whatever may be his private convictions, must hope and pray for the success of the Universal Peace Association and the sufficiency of arbitration in all international disputes. But no American, be he Christian or not, should forget the moral effect on negotiations of the propinquity of an adequate force. It was the moral as well as the military effect of a large and victorious army on the Rio Grande that caused the with-

drawal of the French army from Mexico. The hopelessness of a conflict with the veterans who had fought under Grant and Sherman was felt, not only in France, but throughout all Europe, to an extent difficult at this day to realize. But that that moral effect has, during the past quarter of a century, waned away is just as certain as it is that the vast military force which produced it has resolved itself into its original elements of peaceful and industrious citizenship.

The United States are known of all the world to be wanting in the disposition to utilize their abundant resources for military purposes—not with a view to conquest, but even for the defences suggested by the most ordinary prudence. Ready as they are to wage a commercial warfare, our people close their eyes to the possibilities of an actual collision of arms.

There are false prophets who proclaim that war is to be abolished and that preparation for war is a useless extravagance ; who offer a cheap nostrum for a dreadful disease. Out of that fearful concatenation of evils set forth in the solemn litany of the Holy Catholic Church of America, wherein we are taught to supplicate deliverance from sin ; from the crafts and assaults of the devil ; from plague, pestilence, and famine ; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, they select battle alone for extirpation. Why should they not include sin as well ? Why not include the whole dreadful catalogue ? Why not form an association for the suppression of all inordinate and sinful affections ?

The truth is that war is an ordinance of God. The flaming sword that guards the way to sinless Eden will continue to prevail, until man enters once more into that peace which passeth all understanding, when the lust of the eye and the pride of life shall no more be known. But mortal man cannot yet discern the coming of that day.

Meanwhile let practical America recognize the truth that war is a calamity that may overtake the most peaceful nation, and that insurance against war by preparation for it is, of all methods, the most business-like, the most humane, and the most in accordance with the teachings of the Christian religion.

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